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Comments Regarding Bill #983 AN ACT CONCERNING THE LOW-INCOME ENERGY ADVISORY BOARD

Before the Energy and Technology Committee

February 24, 2009

Prepared by Shirley Bergert¹

Recommended Action: *Support, with minor modification*

This proposal makes state officials ex-officio non-voting members of the Low Income Energy Advisory Board (LIEAB). LIEAB is charged with advising the General Assembly, Departments of Public Utility Control and Social Services and the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) regarding low-income energy issues. It is occasionally awkward to have LIEAB vote on issues when some of the members voting are representatives of the agency being advised. This allows for information and input from these members, without the awkwardness involved in having to recuse themselves from voting when there could be a conflict.

Suggested modification of the proposal: Subsection (b) of the proposal deletes LIEAB's current responsibility to advise and assisting OPM. OPM sets energy policy affecting low income state residents. This language should not be deleted. OPM has significant energy policy responsibilities, for example, in administration of energy related grants, planning obligations regarding energy requirements (CGS §16a-4a), broad oversight of energy matters (CGS §16a-14), and it is obligated to operate an electric purchasing pool for state facilities and offer low income households access to aggregated utility rates (CGS §16a-14e). OPM also has responsibility for oversight of agency policy, budgeting and programs in Title 4, including DSS planning regarding energy and weatherization assistance block grants and potential state supplemental funding. LIEAB should continue to have the authority to provide advice to OPM when appropriate.

¹ Shirley Bergert serves: on the Low Income Energy Advisory Board (Conn. Gen. Stat. § 16a-41b); as the residential representative on the Energy Conservation Management Board overseeing the expenditure of ratepayer conservation funds in Connecticut Energy Efficiency Fund (Conn. Gen. Stat. § 16-245m); as the low income representative on the Fuel Oil Conservation Board (Conn. Gen. Stat. § 16a-22f); and on the Advisory Board of the Institute for Sustainable Energy at Eastern Connecticut State University.